

Urban and Community Forestry Program

FACT SHEET

TOWN / CITY TREE AND FOREST COMMITTEES **Citizens Working Together for a Healthier Community Forest**

A Town Tree / Forest Committee is a citizen led group, that works with town public officials to improve health of the urban and community forest through tree plantings, advocacy, education, management and maintenance activities.

Why Have a Tree and Forest Committee?

There are many benefits to having a Tree and Forest Committee in your community. Such committees can:

- ❖ Advocate for better public tree and forest management, and more public support for urban and community forestry.
- ❖ Get Work Done. They may help complete an inventory, education campaign, planting program or tree ordinance.
- ❖ Bring in Additional Resources for town trees and forests. Committees help apply for grants, solicit private donations, organize fundraisers, and advocate for larger budgets.
- ❖ Reduce Conflicts. Committees can help reduce potential conflicts by providing a forum for reviewing complaints, addressing safety issues, and supporting tree warden decisions.
- ❖ Help Raise Public Awareness. Citizen committees can be quite successful at educating residents about the importance of trees and urban forestry, and raising public awareness of the needs of trees and forests.
- ❖ Improve your Urban and Community Forest. Taken together, all these benefits result in an improved urban and community forest for your city or town.



How Do Tree and Forest Committees Form?

Some Tree and Forest Committees have been around for decades. Others form when the Tree Warden or town officials see the need for more citizen involvement in forestry. Most are advisory to the town and Tree Warden, but some have the authority of the Tree Warden.



Most Tree and Forest Committees in Massachusetts have formed when a group of citizens wants to get more involve in forestry. In most cases, these groups go to the Mayor or Select Board and ask that an officially recognized Tree and Forest Advisory Committee be appointed.

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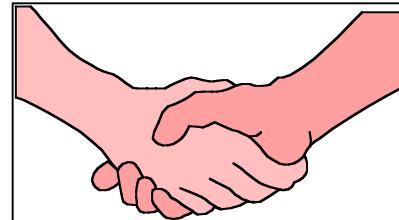
Talk to your Tree Warden. Talk to town officials. Talk to other interested and knowledgeable residents. Ask how a citizen Tree and Forest Committee could help in your town. See if you can get one started.

Examples of Tree and Forest Committees in Massachusetts

- ❖ Brookline: The Brookline Tree Committee is the oldest continuous Tree Committee in the Commonwealth. In addition to advocating for trees in their community, they act as the Tree Warden in Brookline, coordinating contracts for tree maintenance, inspecting sites, selecting trees, and managing a tree inventory.
- ❖ Fall River: This Committee began in 1996 with about a dozen individuals interested in seeing more trees in their town. They concentrate on coordinating volunteer tree plantings in neighborhoods throughout the community.
- ❖ Stoughton: Stoughton's Urban Forestry Committee is an ad hoc group with no "official" status that works to improve the urban forest of their community. They have successfully applied for state and national grants, started a tree nursery, and created parks in town. They work with the Tree Warden, Conservation Commission, and Open Space Committee.

Tips for Successful Tree and Forest Boards

- ❖ **Try to build a board that is representative of the diversity of your community.**
- ❖ Look for members with some area of expertise (arborist, communications specialist, grant writer, etc.). Make sure, in particular, that you have some members with knowledge of trees, forestry and arboriculture.
- ❖ Find members who are interested in working positively with all constituents and especially with the Tree Warden, town commissions, and other public officials.
- ❖ Start with some easily achievable and tangible projects. Some tree boards have found that difficult projects (like writing a new tree ordinance or conducting a full inventory) often result in frustration and produce little to show for the effort.
- ❖ Rotate your leadership and membership often. This helps groups guard against "burn-out" and continually brings in new ideas.
- ❖ Make sure that all members are committed to finding solutions, not just identifying problems.



For Information or Assistance on Building a Tree and Forest Committee, Please Contact:

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